

WHO ARE WE

Henry McLaughlin and William Harvey established their business as Builders and Contractors in Belfast in 1853. Armed with character, determination and the tools of their respective trades, McLaughlin and Harvey set out to make a success of their newly formed company.



Henry McLaughlin was a journeyman mason who combined practical skill with an intense desire for technical knowledge of his craft, a desire he satisfied by constant study. Born in 1819, by the time McLaughlin was 30 he had become a foreman mason and it was in that capacity that he was engaged by James Carlisle, the contractor for the Courthouse, Crumlin Road, Belfast. There McLaughlin worked alongside William Harvey, the foreman carpenter on the development.

The Courthouse completed, McLaughlin was sent to underpin the cast iron columns of Carlisle Mill; hazardous overtime work for which his wages were thirty shillings a week. Harvey on the other hand was left out-of-work. With a large-hearted generosity that was typical of him, McLaughlin gave his friend a share of his wages to tide him over. Unexpectedly McLaughlin and Harvey's business opportunity arose around this time.

A new mill was to be built for the Rosebank Weaving Co, and the proprietors, knowing of his ability, asked McLaughlin to undertake the work. McLaughlin pointed out that he had no money to buy materials or pay wages. Rosebank Weaving Co financed the job giving McLaughlin £5, 5s. Od. a week for his services and a promised bonus when the mill was built.

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Arrangements made, McLaughlin promptly brought in Harvey and they set up business at 130 York Street, in the year 1853. Quite unlike the rigorous contract procedures today, it is of interest to note that there were no formal contract documents or deeds of partnership drawn up. All concerned relied upon each other's good faith and all were amply justified.

Following the completion of Rosebank, the company undertook many similar projects during the great expansion and development of the linen industry in Northern Ireland. The company did not confine themselves to industrial building, undertaking Coleraine Town Hall (1857), St Matthew's Church Belfast (1863) and the railway stations at Portrush and Larne Harbour.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close McLaughlin & Harvey had extended from its Belfast base and was successfully completing works throughout Ireland, including Waterford and Dublin. Then at the turn of the century McLaughlin & Harvey's focus of expansion moved, first to London in 1905 and subsequently throughout Great Britain from Edinburgh to the Channel Islands, from Ipswich to Prestatyn North Wales.

An expansion into Civil Engineering commenced in 1934, with marine and harbour works and infrastructure transportation being significant areas. The company became a limited company in 1899 and remained so until 1979 when McLaughlin & Harvey went public. New ownership in 1993 returned the company to private limited company ownership.

In 2007, McLaughlin & Harvey completed the acquisition of Barr Holdings. Barr Ltd started life in the late nineteenth century as W & J Barr & Sons, a local builder and joiner based in Ayrshire. In the late 1960's the company expanded into civil engineering and higher value projects. From the late 1980's to the turn of the century, the Barr family embarked upon a major expansion and diversification that took the company into areas such as house building, leisure management and retail. Since 2003, Barr refocused its business approach to Construction, Manufacturing, Industrial and Environmental divisions. Barr Construction specialised in the design and construction of sports stadia and arenas as well as large scale leisure, commercial and retail projects. In December 2014, McLaughlin & Harvey and Barr Construction came together under a single trading band to create a much more significant force in the UK construction industry.

Throughout the company's history, one thing has remained constant, the dedication of McLaughlin & Harvey staff and operatives to deliver clients with quality works. McLaughlin & Harvey's legacy of 160 years can be seen throughout the British Isles with landmark construction works. Henry McLaughlin and William Harvey, the founders of the company, would no doubt be justifiably proud.